

SNEAK PREVIEW

A \$32 MILLION PRODUCTION

The 'force' stays with the

The ultimate space-age fairy-tale, "Return of the Jedi", is all set to take Australia by storm

Six years ago, George Lucas astounded the world with "Star Wars", a sleeper science-fiction film which is now one of the most successful money-making movies in history. He captured the imagination of young and old alike with special effects wizardry, added to the simple theme of good versus evil.

Then, in 1980, he offered "The Empire Strikes Back", a sequel of sorts, continuing

the adventures of Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia Organa, Han Solo and the dreaded Darth Vader.

Now "Return of the Jedi", the last of the "Star Wars" trilogy, is set for release in Australia next month. The whole gang is back for another episode in the rocket-propelled fairy-tale, along with a myriad of amusing creatures in the "galaxy far, far away".

The movie has already pulled in more than \$100 million at the box office since its late May opening in the United States, with revenue climbing every day. Even some ardent Australian fans have reportedly flown all the way to America to see the end of this remarkable movie saga. They had to know the answers to the questions

posed in "The Empire Strikes Back". Will Han Solo be freed from the carbonite in which he was imprisoned? If so, can he then escape from the clutches of Jabba the Hutt, the slimy Mr Big of the intergalactic underworld? Will Luke Skywalker become a true Jedi Knight? And is Darth Vader really Luke's father?

While numerous American reviewers have been less than thrilled with the answers, thousands of movie-goers have ogled and cheered the two-year, \$32.5 million production which boasts more than 900 special effects.

"The biggest challenge of any 'Star Wars' film is to make it better than the previous one," says art director Joe Johnston. "That was the problem we faced with 'The Empire Strikes Back'. We had to come up with so many new things to make it better than the first because that was no longer unique. We've had to make 'Jedi' even more exciting than 'Empire', which I think we've done."

George Lucas, creator of the cinematic wonders, says "Return of the Jedi" is — at least technologically — better than its predecessors.

"The space battle is 10 times more



WITH 900 SPECIAL EFFECTS...

'Star Wars' team

complicated than the one in 'Star Wars'. If you went back and saw that one after seeing this one, it wouldn't be nearly as exciting as you thought."

Now that he has finished the middle trilogy — Lucas says the whole story encompasses nine episodes — the filmmaker is unsure if he will continue with the series.

Until he starts up the "Star Wars" machinery again at a later date — if he ever does — fanatics will have to be satisfied with "Jedi", which takes the viewer back to the planet of Tatooine, the desert land where Luke grew up. Luke is not trying to discover his roots, but to find Han Solo, who is still encased in carbonite and surrounded by Jabba the Hutt, the pus-covered blob, and his assorted vile creatures.

One by one, Han's friends arrive to make the daring rescue, but before it is complete, Luke battles not only the hog-like Gamorrean pigs, but also a dragon-like creature reminiscent of the Godzilla movies, while R2-D2, C-3PO, Lando Calrissian, Princess Leia, Chewbacca and a reawakened Han help bring about Jabba's demise.

All this, however, is just a prelude to the real battle and the core of the "Star Wars" theme — the struggle between the rebel alliance and the corrupt empire and between Luke, the last of the Jedis, and the hooded Darth Vader.

Even Yoda reappears to help Luke prepare for the inevitable clash.

While some have complained that the novelty of a "Star Wars" is lost in the special effects extravaganza of "Jedi", most agree the acting is better, reflecting a maturing of the film's three main stars — Carrie Fisher as Princess Leia, Mark Hamill as Luke Skywalker and Harrison Ford as Han Solo. □

— WAYNE WALLEY

RIGHT: Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) rescuing the Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) from Jabba's ship. **BELOW:** Daring Han Solo (Harrison Ford) and Luke are in trouble again as they are captured by a pygmy tribe on a remote planet. **FAR LEFT:** The personification of evil — slimy Jabba the Hutt. **BOTTOM (left):** Just who is Darth Vader? **(Centre):** The smart droid, R2-D2, meets the primitive Ewoks — the incredibly fierce little teddy bears. **And (right):** C-3PO, dithering but lovable.

